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Constructing the herder-farmer conflict as (in)security in Nigeria
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Response to Reviewers:	The paper was proofread to check for grammar errors and writing mistakes. Also, I referred to Krause and Williams' book entitled, "Critical security studies: concepts and cases" (see page 6).

Title page:

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Abstract

The recent spate of violence mostly in north-central and southern Nigeria, typically credited to conflicts between herders and farmers, and the reactions, narratives and representations that have attended them, calls for an examination of core security questions: who or what is to be secured, from what threat and by what means. In fact, it could be further contextualised as: how is the conflict between farmers and herders constructed, framed and represented as (in)security within the Nigerian context?

Several existing works have approached the evolving conflict between pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria from a range of perspectives, mostly accounting for the reasons or causal factors driving such conflicts. This commonly include references to ecological factors as responsible for the uncontrolled north-south migration of herdsmen which encourages the struggle for— and access to—land and its resources between herders and farmers. At the same time, some studies point to the rise of herdsmen militancy and in doing so draw inconclusive links to other security issues in Nigeria such as terrorism and secessionist movements. However, there has been significant efforts by state officials and interest groups to describe the conflict either as producing insecurity or to refute such claims of insecurity.

This study employs critical constructivism as advanced by Jutta Weldes to examine how the conflict is framed and represented as insecurity. It finds that the discourses produced by the federal and state governments as well as interest groups, constructs it in specific ways by linking specific factors to offer possible explanations of the conflict. As such, the discourses that frames the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria are: securitization, fulanisation, and sedentarisation. This study presents an important contribution to understanding the framing, constructions and representations of the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria.

Keywords: critical security, Africa, social construction

Introduction

The evolving conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria has raised questions regarding

the notion of security. Principally, it calls for the reappraisal of what or who is to be secured

from what "threat", by what means and for what purposes. The history of farmer-herder

relations in Nigeria reveals an episodic struggle over access to land and its resources as well as

other complex issues with regard to social diversity and ethno-communal heterogeneity. The

southward (east-west) migration of herders from the north, owing to a range of constitutive

"factors", increasingly exacerbates interaction with communities in southern Nigeria and, often, lead to suspicion and conflicts.[1] Additionally, the use of lethal weapons by herders and farmers, as well as alleged practices of rape, kidnapping, arson, cattle rustling, among others, seeks to forcibly escalate conflicts between herders and farmers.[2]

In the main, however, some existing studies have focused on the activities of herdsmen as, quite uncritically, the primary justification for the escalation of conflicts.[3] Chiefly, stereotypes that represents herders as belonging to a particular ethnic group—Fulani—with certain pre-given essence (the term *Pulaaku* is frequently used to describe their nomadic specificity)[4] and telos (expansionist and hegemonic), is routinely invoked to describe the continuity and changes in farmer-herder relationship and conflicts. Akinyetun argues that pastoralists have evolved from mere "pastoralists to barrel-carrying herdsmen", which aligns them with other threats in Nigeria especially Boko Haram terrorism and Niger Delta militancy.[5] Similarly, Johnson and Taofik describe Fulani-herdsmen as, among other things, "the new face of terrorism in Nigeria."[6] Indeed, this linear explanation of events which traces the evolution of herders and establishes links to terrorism, often ignore important challenges faced by pastoralists in Nigeria. As Okoli observed, "herders face existential threat and, therefore, resort to self-help, even if it means adopting violent means."[7] This is because, farmers' encroachment on grazing route due to crop rotation and other extensive agricultural practices often lead to the northward migration of farmers. What's more, cattle rustling has also been described as a "threat" to the livelihood of herders.[8] All this, however, does not necessarily justify the alleged violent strategies employed by herders neither is violence used by herders alone.

Furthermore, the impact of climatic conditions, population growth, overgrazing and mechanised farming, and the lack of regulatory policies to manage the relationship between land users have equally been highlighted as some of the root causes of the conflict. In this

regard, Okoli and Atelhe notes that herders are both ecologically and structurally marginalised[9] due to desertification in northern Nigeria which significantly depletes grazing land. At the same time, the absence of proper implementation of policies to regulate land use contributes to the conflict between herders and farmers. By and large, the migration of herders (labelled as Fulani-herdsmen) into southern Nigeria (assumed to be occupied by farmers and other ethnic communities) provokes series of challenges: pastoralists in their search for pasture to graze their herds, intrude into farmlands, in most cases, causing significant damages to crop yield. Consequently, some farmers and indigenous communities in these regions resort to cattle rustling and other reprisal strategies which only stokes the resolve of herders to adopt "deadly" techniques, spawning a vicious cycle of violence.

It is in this context that the Global Terrorism Index, in 2015, classified herdsmen as "Fulani militants" and ranked "the group" as the fourth deadliest in the world.[10] However, this labelling and ranking is both problematic and misleading. On the one hand, the representation of herdsmen as a "militant group," ranked amongst other terrorist groups, essentializes what appears to be a complex and an unfolding event that involves different actors. To say the least, this contributes to the securitisation of herders, as some academic works have unreflexively cited this ranking to rationalise claims in respect to the terroristic dimension of herders.[11] On the other hand, this further reveals an external dimension to what is considered domestic (or at least, regional), and is yet to be treated as a security problem in Nigeria. Nonetheless, there has been statements offered by official and non-official actors (such as: the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria, Gan Allah Fulani Association, Jamu Nate Fulbe Association, Christian Association of Nigeria, the federal government of Nigeria, state governments, among others) which presents interpretations of the conflict as either productive of insecurity or refutes such claims of insecurity.

To elaborate here, state actors at both federal and state levels and interest groups, define the conflict as a threat to the livelihood of either herders and farmers, ethnic and cultural values, food security, or by extension, national unity. Given this, they argue that the Nigerian Federal Government should employ vigorous security measures to ensure the survival of these referents.[12] Instructively, the federal government have, instead, offered a range of statements—including policies on cattle grazing and settlements—which seeks to disprove definitions of the conflict along ethno-religious lines (Fulani-north-Muslim against the Christian-southern Others). This also highlights significant contextual aspects of Nigeria's federal structure which consistently facilitates competition between the federal and state governments on one hand, and inter-state competition for access to resources and power to influence national policies, on the other. Osaghae aptly narrates that the federal government's failure to securitise "the issue" provides grounds for state governments, interest groups, and civil society organisations to question the responsiveness of the Federal government.[13] In essence this has raised significant questions regarding the notion of insecurity vis-à-vis the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria, some of which this study seeks to explore.

This study takes a different approach from existing studies that either explore the causes of herder-farmer conflicts or discusses it within the framework of national security. Rather, this study examines how the herders-farmer conflict is constructed, framed and represented as insecurity given Nigeria's socio-cultural diversity and recent political events (2015-2019). Importantly, it takes seriously the objective definition of threats as something "out there", know or knowable by certain given properties. Instead, it probes the social production of meanings about insecurity within specific social contexts. To be clear, the aim, then, is to analyse discourses or meanings about the herder-farmer conflict, within the framework of (in)security, as described by state actors and interest groups in Nigeria.

This study proceeds as follows: the second section develops a conceptual framework by exploring various discursive approaches in security studies researches. It then outlines the core ontological premises of critical constructivism as explained by Weldes to provide a framework for analysing (in)security in Nigeria. In the third section, it presents a brief history of herder-farmer relationship and conflicts in Nigeria. This study uses poststructural discourse analysis to examine texts and talks produced by the presidency and some federal ministries in Nigeria in relation to conflicts between herders and farmers. Also, it examines speeches and statements offered by state governments in northern and southern Nigeria as well as interest groups such as MACBAN and CAN, which articulates and provide representations of the herder-farmer conflict. In the fourth section, this study employs the analytic technique of *articulation* and *interpellation* to examine the emergent discourses and how they frame the conflict as well as contestations and limitations of these discourses. This include discourses of securitization, fulanisation, and sedentarisation.

Constructing (in)security through language and discourse

In a broad sense, discursive approaches in security studies rejects rationalists' treatment of danger or threat as an objective fact—out there—which, self-evidently, requires the application of certain measures, usually carried out by the state, to ensure the survival of referents. Instead, discursive approaches seek to understand how security is constructed through interpretive and representative practices. In other words, the object or subject to be secured as well as the threat and ways of addressing such threat are socially produced. Doty, for example, notes that "a discourse is a system of statements in which each individual statement makes sense, produces interpretative possibilities by making it virtually impossible to think outside of it."[14] Of this, Hansen argues that the role of discourse is to "fix meaning around a closed structure",

consequently creating the reality which it names even though it has no direct "relationship or essence to the event it is said to derive from."[15] In doing so, it "allows people to differentiate and identity things, giving them qualities and attributes that are taken for granted and, in the process, relate them to other objects."[16]

According to Fierke, it is through discourse that we make sense of material reality, given that the material world and our ideas about it are co-constitutive instead of separate.[17] Moreover, language system, discourse, and speech acts, as post-positivist modes of inquiry, are shared by different constructivist, post-structuralist, and post-modern methodologies in (critical) security studies. Expounding on the interpretivist turn in security studies, Williams and Krause observes that it "allows us to understand the genesis and structure of particular security problems as grounded in historical conditions and practices, rather than in abstract assertion of transcendental rational actors and scientific methods."[18] In other words, the shift from objectivity to a focus on historicity and reflexivity encourages a broader understanding of security by examining ways in which referents, perceptions of threats, and available means of securing them continue to shift over time.

Fundamentally, language and discourse has been used to examine security questions following the agenda to broaden and widen the notion of security.[19] The Copenhagen School approach security as speech acts which represents an object or subject as existentially threatened by an issue, thus, requiring the use of extra-ordinary measures to ensure the survival of that referent. Buzan further stress that for any issue to be successfully securitised it needs to be effectively dramatized by the securitising actor, by way of presenting it to an audience as existentially threatening.[20] Doing so allows for the application of measures outside the realms of "normal politics." At the same time, this also makes de-securitisation possible through representations that keeps an issue within the bounds of "normal politics."[21]

Moreover, the Copenhagen School introduced societal security as a sector, with the aim of broadening the notion of security by moving away from the traditional military sector. Societal security emphasises the importance of collective identity which defines a community therefore making it, essentially, an object to be secured. However, the Copenhagen School have been criticised for its overly top-down model given that the securitising actor, typically, the state, is often the most powerful actor.[22] Again this (re)enacts the state-centric perspective encouraged in traditional security scholarship which is unhelpful in understanding the case study treated in this paper. Besides, Bilgin argues that "securitization theory has been developed mostly through the study of empirical cases drawn from European experiences."[23] On this note, Bilgin explains that securitisation theory privileges a Western-style state-society relation and may not be able to account for contexts that "are characterised by different configurations of state-society dynamics",[24] in postcolonial states, for example. Another weakness of the Copenhagen School, observed by Aradau is, that, the central role played by illocutionary speech act disregards the effects of the act itself.[25] All this may encourage a narrow conceptualisation of security which privileges state-centrism and common-sense analysis of the herder-farmer conflict.

Moving forward, post-structuralist approaches have also been used to demonstrate the discursive constructions of "regimes of truth" to permit certain political possibilities. Campbell, for example, notes that the "role of interpretation in the articulation of danger or threat is not restricted to the process by which some risks come to be considered more serious than others, but also how certain modes of representations crystallises around referents marked as threat."[26] In a sense, poststructuralists take identity as central. Although, "identity (and difference) is not fixed, given, nor is it planned by intentional behaviour; rather, it is constituted in social relations and incomplete."[27] Connolly lucidly points out that, "in making sense of self, the other often tend to be defined as something inferior, unequal, different, or [a threat]."[28] Therefore,

poststructuralism, in most cases, seeks to unmask the (re)production of oppositional identities in the construction of threat or danger.

From the above, the construction of identity and difference, to restate Hansen, often take spatial, temporal, and ethical dimensions. While the spatial dimension seeks to erect boundaries between spaces (creating an inside and outside); the temporal dimension emphasises progress and transformative change (or continuity); ethical dimension implies the discursive construction of morality and responsibility.[29] All three dimensions of identity construction frequently intermingle in discourse. For example, boundaries could emerge between groups within a state who define themselves and other groups according to geographical location and development, and such representations may evoke moral responsibilities.

Of course, poststructuralism have been applied variously in security researches to explore different cases and in doing so contribute to the broadening project in security studies. For instance, the Paris School, which is associated with the works of Didier Bigo, shifts "the focus from political agency to the institutional level of security professional involved in the definition of threats and the technologies to manage them."[30] However, such restrictive focus on the practices of security professionals may restrain an understanding of "securitisation" processes within a context composed of actors that are not necessarily security experts. To be sure, this approach may not be helpful in examining the emerging case of the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria which presents a discursive contest in defining and fixing meanings, by different—often, non-specialist—actors. Equally, feminist researches in security studies also use poststructuralism to demonstrate how gender, as a social category, is performed through iterative practices.[31] In all, poststructuralists' aim of theorising identity (through radical otherness), may contribute in reifying these assumptions given that the possibility for change is often ignored (although, not all poststructuralist treat identity as oppositional binaries). In other

words, the construction of difference as "radical otherness", as Hansen suggests, "would result in unnecessary theoretical and empirical limitations"[32] while missing out relevant—non-oppositional—nuances, in the self-other[s] contradistinction, embedded in such constructions.

Towards a critical constructivist approach

Given the above discussion, this study moves towards critical constructivism as advanced by Jutta Weldes to offer a broader conceptual framework for analysing the articulation of representations of the herder-farmer conflict as (in)security. Importantly, Weldes' rendering of constructivism specifically demonstrates how the identity of the state, groups, or communities are produced and at the same time produces their insecurities within specific social contexts. This is never a complete or fixed process, as such identity must always be reproduced and in the process reveal its contingent nature. That is, the discourses that describes the phenomenon to provide structures of meanings or common senses are unstable and contestable since they are constructed or "made", by linking possible factors and excluding other factors to define insecurity in a specific way.

Weldes, in *cultures of insecurity*, explains that the material world and ideas about it are inseparable. This ontological inseparability suggests "that we cannot go behind our representations of the world to discover truth."[33] Specifically, the essence of any phenomenon and its organising properties, cannot be fully determined through whatever means or reference we employ. This perspective can be further explained by drawing on the Heideggerian distinction between the ontological and ontical levels.[34] On the one hand, the ontological level refers to implicit assumptions presupposed by any inquiry into specific sort of phenomenon. The ontical, on the other hand, is the specific sorts of phenomena themselves. Going by this definition, this study is not concerned with the underlying essence of the herder-farmer conflict.

Rather it examines the assumptions about the farmer-herder conflict put forward by different actors. This has at least two implications for social and political analysis on (in)security.

First, it takes the state or communities and their insecurities as the object of analysis and examines how they are produced and reproduced. This implies that the representation of threat by state and non-state actors produces that state or group as well as the threat they face within specific contexts. Such relational production of danger evolves from complex social relations and contingencies. Moreover, Weldes notes that the (re)production of insecurity necessitate the "politics of identity and difference" through which difference can, but need not, be transformed into radical otherness. Identity, in this case, is not a simple oppositional binary between the self and the (radical) other. It is more than this. Weldes explains that identity, though constructed in relation to difference, "might be aggressive and hostile, but also peaceful and non-threatening."[35] The possibility of "multiple otherness" offers a wider framework for examining the representations of the "herder-farmer problem" in that this anti-essentialist perspective permits an interrogation of the nuances, gaps, slippages, and contestations of emergent discourses.

The second implication involves the role of power and knowledge in the (re)production of (in)security. In this case, power is defined as productive, that is, it produces "things", forms knowledge and discourses. Particularly, Weldes notes that "identities and insecurities emerge out of a process of representation through which individuals or groups—whether state officials, leaders, journalists—describe to themselves and others the world in which they live."[36] These representations, to be sure, includes linguistic and non-linguistic resources such as narratives, symbols, collective memories, imaginaries, social practices, among others. These cultural resources provide categories for constructing threats, although they are not perfectly coherent hence open to contestation.

Given the above, critical constructivism therefore presents significant insights in respect to notions of broadening and widening security. As Krause notes, the "basic claims of the critical constructivist approach are that "security" is not an objective condition, that threats are not simply a matter of correctly perceiving a constellation of material forces, and that the object of security is not fixed."[37] With this, therefore, the purpose is to understand, contextually, how threats are produced and reproduced through representations that seeks to normalise certain identities of an object or subject. This entails asking "how-questions" to understand how those identities are represented to produce referents, threats and how to address them. In this light, then, this study examines the following questions: how is the herder-farmer conflict constructed and represented as insecurity in Nigeria? What does these representations do (or don't do)? Finally, this constructivist approach also implicates the researcher in knowledge production, as the researcher is equally embedded in the world that s/he is analysing. As such, the broad abstractions produced in this study to describe the representations of the conflict is open to contestation.

Analytical Strategy: Articulation and Interpellation

This study uses poststructural discourse analysis to examine texts and talks that provide representations of the conflict within the framework of (in)security. Essentially, poststructural discourse analysis is concerned with language, which should not be equated to specific instances of linguistic expressions nor does it seek to uncover the underlying meanings of social practices that are concealed. It shares Saussure's understanding of language as system of signs, however poststructuralists such as Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe, insist that language is form and not substance and highlights the reflexive character of language in different contexts.[38] Its anti-foundationalist standpoint rejects the notion of "truth" whether by reference to God, nature, science, capitalism, among others. Hence, this study uses poststructural discourse analysis

approach to tease out how broad representations of "truth" are "made" through significations, articulations, and representations to produce discourses about the farmer-herder conflict. Specifically, meanings are made through a complex relationship: by using *signs* to identify things which gives them certain qualities and attributes and in doing so *articulate* nodal points which partially fix meaning to *represent* that "thing" in a certain way. In what follows, this paper briefly explains the analytic technique of *articulation* and *interpellation* used to examine the constructions and representations of the herder-farmer conflict.

Chiefly, *articulation* suggests the combination of existing linguistic and non-linguistic resources to produce contingent and contextual representations. According to Laclau and Mouffe, the practice of articulation is the construction of nodal points using floating signifiers, to establish "objectivity" which partially fix meanings.[39] Once the signifiers and connections between them are partially fixed, a specific discourse has been produced or articulated. Seen this way, this study uses articulation to investigate how different signs coalesce to construct an object or subject in specific ways to evoke specific meanings about insecurity. Although Weldes notes that articulations "are never simply produced once, instead, to prevent them from unbinding, they have to be reproduced."[40] The aim of analysis, then, is not only to understand the articulatory process but to interrogate the gaps, slippages, and contestations that reveals its contingent nature.

On the other hand, *interpellation* "refers to the dual process whereby identities or subject-positions are created, and humans and non-humans are hailed into or interpellated by them."[41] The process of interpellation was further explained by Weldes as:

> Specific subject positions are created when social phenomena are depicted; different descriptions entail different subject positions/identities. Each subject-position/identity carries with it particular ways of functioning in the world, is located within specific power relations, and is characterised by particular interests.[42]

This study uses interpellation to illustrate how security referent subjects or objects as well as threats are produced through articulatory or representational practices. Doty defines subject positioning as the way in which subjects and objects are placed within discursive practices read as text.[43] This produces certain kinds of relationships such as oppositional, similarity, and complementary. In a word, therefore, this study employs these two related processes of articulation and interpellation to interrogate the discourses that frames the conflict between herders and farmers.

This study analyses spoken and written words produced at different sites, namely, at official and non-official levels. This includes official speeches, statements, interviews, and press releases by the presidency, the ministry of agriculture, and the ministry of information on the Human settlement plan (2019) in relation to the herder-farmer conflict. Also, speeches, interviews, press releases, statements offered by state governors and individuals that represent specific interest groups—farmers, herders, religious, ethnic, regional, and so on—, produced between 2015-2019, form part of the data for this study. All these are publicly available (official websites, new reports, and so on) and spoken words were read as texts.

A Brief history of herder-farmer relationship and conflicts in Nigeria
The relationship between herders and farmers in Nigeria is convoluted, spanning several centuries and predates the post-colonial Nigerian state. Several anthropological accounts have described the identity of pastoralists and the dynamism of their relationship with farmers in different regions within Nigeria.[44] It is pertinent to note, however, that among different pastoral groups in Nigeria, the Fulbe or Fulani is the largest with respect to size and ownership of herds (herds include cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys). Moreover, Fulani societies (the main groups are: Daneeji, Pagaya'en, Sisilbe and Bargu'en, Rahaji and Sirifa'en)[45] show remarkable

plasticity due to their continuous adaption processes and ability to reinvent themselves in new spaces.

Azarya writes that the Fulani ethnic group widely inhabit West and Central Africa and their evolution has been one of constant migration along with their herds.[46] It is often assumed that different Fulbe groups moved into Nigeria between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, settling around the northern borders of what is today northern Nigeria. The identity of these Fulbe groups in Nigeria, to be sure, are frequently constructed in three ways: as a homogenous—but also different—nomadic group spread across West and Central Africa; as a political union, Hausa-Fulani; and as a distinct ethnic group in Nigeria with identifiable markers. Generally, they engage in herding but also cultivate crops, mostly carried out by women. This agro-pastoralist dimension, which is frequently ignored in scholarship, has been reanimated by ethnographies on Fulbe societies to destabilise stereotypes of Fulani identity.[47] Bello, for example, finds that in Yobe state, about 25 percent of herders, who are Fulani, are agro-pastoralists, combining cattle-herding with arable crop production.[48] Although, pastoralists among Fulbe groups frequently make seasonal movement from semi-arid zones in north to the humid areas in the south. These movements increased after the 1804 Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio due to the expansion of the caliphate, and the colonial administration which provided political stability.[49] Moreover, disease challenges and other factors often limited their migration to southern Nigeria.

Consequently, a dynamic relationship developed between Fulbe groups and other ethnic communities in northern and southern Nigeria. In the north, for example, Hausa traders acted as middlemen or entrepreneurs in the livestock trade, and also created a market for dairy products. Although they bartered dairy products, hinds, and meat for food crop produced by Hausa farmers, they also cultivated their own crops. This was mostly carried out by Fulbe

women. Additionally, integration in the north took the form of socio-cultural unions between the Hausa ethnic group and Fulbe groups in Nigeria. This was encouraged by the Islamic and political institutions brought about by the 1804 Jihad (which saw the Fulani take over leadership from their Hausa host and led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate) as well as through marriage and mere co-habitation.[50]

By 1960, Fulbe groups had established settlements in southwest Nigeria, around the north of Oyo town which provided a suitable climate for both herd and herders. Essentially, the spread of the Islamic religion in the southwest contributed to establishing relatively stable relations with the local population compare to the southeast were such cultural connection was absent. During this time, some Fulbe who owned no herd, took on herding contracts with local Yoruba cattle owners. They also established permanent farms on which they grew different crops for subsistence. Blench identifies three Fulbe groups that were in the north of Oyo in the 1960s: namely, the Borgu'en agro-pastoralists, the Hausa'en who adopted farming as they became embedded in the local culture, and the Leyyi clans who moved into Ilorin and Kabba and frequently came into conflict with the local farmers.[51] In the southeast, Fulbe pastoralists encountered initial setbacks in the 1960s due to cultural differences, civil war, and other reasons. By 1990, six ruga groups with 2,000 animals made seasonal movements to Okigwe and the surrounding areas of Anambra state.[52] This was encouraged by good pasture, rice residues, tolerance from local authorities and crop farmers, and the demand for meat in the region. Cohen notes that there were other Fulbe communities in the southeast who engaged in long-distance trade and the marketing of livestock in local markets—*gariki.[53]*

In one way or another, the relationship between different Fulbe pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria often produce conflicts. Since the 2000s, increase in confrontations and violence as a result of several "factors" has been reported and analysed.[54] These factors include: the rapid

increase in southward migration which often leads to "population explosion"; reduction in grazing land; cultural differences between Fulbe pastoralists and local farmers; collapse of the *burti* system (cattle tracks or grazing route); climate change; cattle diseases and poor veterinary services; the destruction of farm crops by cattle; the use of guns and other deadly weapons by farmers and herders; and lack of policies and programmes to address recurring issues.[55]

Abass describes these conflicts as outcomes of a pluralistic society.[56] Indeed, Nigeria present a heterogeneous society of different ethnic and linguistic groups as well as religious, class, and regional differences. Some of these differences become emphasised with migration and interaction, which increases mutual suspicion among competing groups, hence may lead to conflict. To emphasise, the conflictual outcomes of social diversity in Nigeria is not limited to farmer-herder relations, but rather encompass other spheres of human activity and social relations. However, as described above, the relationship between herders and farmers is not always conflictual as the possibility to integrate with indigenous communities in the north and south (east and west), and also to reinvent themselves in new spaces—through caretaking arrangements, trade, and farming—has been illustrated throughout. This makes it especially significant to interrogate the constructions and representations of the conflict against the background of this heterogeneity as well as other recent political events in Nigeria.

Discourse of Securitization

Largely, securitisation discourses link a chain of statements to describe the herder-farmer conflict as insecurity to achieve specific—often political—purposes. In the main, it highlights the use of "firearms" by herdsmen, which is described as "unusual" given the essentialist view of Fulani-herders as cattle breeders who do not need guns. Additionally, connections are made

to other security issues in Nigeria to contextualise this use of firearm and herdsmen militancy within the domains of insecurity. Certainly, this discourse typically disregards other possible factors (outlined above) that contributes to the evolution of the conflict. Although, there are counter-discourses and contestations that refutes these assumptions and in doing so illustrates their contingent (and political) character. The president general of the Ohaneze Ndigbo, John Nwodo, in a press interview, narrates that:

> In Nigeria, we have Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram terrorism…and terrorism tracking organisations have ranked them as the third and fourth deadliest terrorist organisation, that kind of organisation which has ravaged farmlands in Nigeria, killed quite a number of people, has not been classified as a terrorists organisation. Labelling of the Indigenous People of Biafra was extremely unfair and lopsided.[57]

Principally, this interrogates the (selective) labelling of "terrorist groups" in relation to the secessionist agitations by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the south-east, described as acts of terrorism by Nigeria's federal government. Although this highlights the complex ethnic faultline in Nigeria, it specifically draws links between the militancy of Fulani-herders and the issue of terrorism in Nigeria. Relatedly, the governor of Ekiti state, Ayo Fayose, advised communities in Ekiti state to spray poisonous herbicides on their farmlands to keep Fulani-herders at bay while vigilante groups were encouraged to take up arms to defend their territories.[58] Also, Ekiti state passed a law in August 2016, prohibiting open grazing and making it a crime for pastoralist to carry firearms.[59] These statements and articulatory practices typically emphasise the use of "firearms by herders," and serves as a sign that represents herders as "threat" to farmers and ethnic communities in southern Nigeria. Explicitly, it objectifies herders as a "threat," while farmers and indigenous communities in the south(east and west) are represented as subjects and objects (this includes ethnic values, as well as indigenous land) to be secured either by the state or through individual action.

Furthermore, the alleged use of firearms and herdsmen militancy has been framed in other ways to describe the Nigerian state, namely, its territorial integrity, as the referent object instead of specific individuals or ethnic groups. This further illustrates the nuances and instability of the organising properties that constitutes insecurity in Nigeria. Instructively, Governor Dave Umahi, the chairman of the south-east governors' forum, and the governor of Ebonyi state, explained that:

> Herdsmen terrorizing, killing people and raping women in the south-east region, are AK47-armed 'foreign' herdsmen who do not speak Fulfude, Hausa or English. We requested joint operation with security forces to flush these people out. We don't really have issues with our "traditional herdsmen" who have been with us for a long time.[60]

Similarly, Nigeria's minister of agriculture, Audu Ogbe, notes that the recent intrusion of Fulani-pastoralists from neighbouring West African states, who are somewhat protected under the ECOWAS free movement agreement, is responsible for the problem between herders and farmers.[61] Although herders are constructed, in this case, as a "threat", however they are "aliens or noncitizens". The Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakr, who is the highest Islamic leader in Nigeria, contends that "herdsmen are terrorists and "foreigners" coming into Nigeria to cause a breach of peace; by contrast, "Nigerian Fulani" herdsmen are peace-loving and law-abiding."[62] These statements, articulations, and representations share the view that herders constitute a compelling threat given the fact that they use guns and their conflict with farmers often turn out fatal, causing harm to individuals and communities in Nigeria. Chiefly, while described Fulani-herdsmen as a threat, they make the distinction between "foreign" and "local" or "traditional" herdsmen. The significance of these *articulatory* and *interpellatory* practices are further explained below.

These discourses use signs such as "foreign" and "migration" to classify and create subject positions. In this case, the West African sub-region where Fulani-herders supposedly migrate

from, aided by ECOWAS protocol on free movement, poses significant danger to Nigeria's territorial sovereignty. This represents the Nigerian state as the object to be secured—by the Nigerian Federal government as the subject that defines and mobilises against insecurity through negotiations with ECOWAS—from the danger posed by herders that are not "citizens" of Nigeria.

In all, these discourses of securitization characterise the farmer-herder conflict as producing insecurity to farmers, ethnic communities in southeast and southwest, and Nigeria's territorial integrity. Nonetheless, other emergent counter-discourses have been put forward to challenge and offer alternative views of the conflict. They present (counter-) narratives that seeks to (re)define the conflict as outcomes of social relations which could be managed through other means than as insecurity.

Particularly, the Nigerian minister of information, Lai Mohammed, explained in an interview why the Nigerian federal government has not, yet, labelled Fulani-herdsmen as terrorist group. He narrates that, "acts of criminality should not be confused with terrorism acts…IPOB and the herdsmen have different agendas."[63] Correspondingly, Iniobong Ekong, senior special assistant in security matters to governor Udom Emmanuel, in a press statement, articulated the position of Akwa Ibom state government in respect to the conflict between farmers and herders in the state:

> These are unfortunate incidents, but I must tell you as a matter of fact that "it is not anywhere near those things people are saying" … In fact, the state government is passionate about the security of its citizens. We don't play politics with it. Within the context of being proactive and the protection of citizens, the government is deeply in relationship and working in synergy with the Hausa/Fulani settlements in the state.[64]

He adds:

> For example, the isolated case in Mkpat Enin was unfortunate and we have to a great extent understood that it was not an invasion, but it is an unfortunate thing and security agencies have addressed it adequately.[65]

These statements above, articulate such signs as "unfortunate", "relationship", and "crime" to produce a (counter-) discourse which refutes claims of insecurity. Essentially, it describes the conflict and violent outcomes as "crime," and distinguishes it from other "types" of insecurities (such as, terrorism in the north, and secessionist movements in the southeast). Given this definition, the herder-farmer conflict should be treated in a way that ensures the preservation of fundamental relationship between herders and indigenous communities in southern Nigeria. This also highlights the nuanced meaning of security which is not easily reducible to a simple north-south—oppositional—dichotomy as state governments, both in the north and south, may offer similar or contradictory interpretations of the conflict.

Discourse of Fulanisation

Importantly, narratives of Fulanisation frames the herder-farmer conflict in specific ways to securitise Fulani-herders. It describes Fulani-herders as "objective threat" to farmers as well as ethnic and religious values in Nigeria. In this case, the north-south (east-west) migration of herders is portrayed as continuation of the age-long quest by Fulbe groups to conquer and dominate other ethno-religious groups in Nigeria (the eastward migration of Fulbe groups into Nigeria, the 1804 Jihad and the spread of Islam, specifically).[66] In particular, accounts of Fulanisation links pastoralism with Islamisation and terrorism in a discursive chain to produce a compelling "regime of truth" about insecurity. This discourse is not unproblematic, however, and has been contested, as will be illustrated below. Nigeria's former president, Olusegun Obasanjo, in a public lecture, explained that:

> The issue of the herdsmen and Boko Haram is no longer an issue of a lack of education and employment for our youths in Nigeria which it began as, it is now West African Fulanisation, African Islamisation and global organised crimes.[67]

The above de-links pastoralists and cultivators' conflicts from other possible explanations related to development discourses. Instead, it connects the conflict to issues of terrorism as well as ethno-religious dimensions. Similarly, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), through its spokesman, Bayo Oladeji, expressed displeasure over the Federal government's plan to address the herder-farmer conflict by establishing a radio station, noting that the FG's languid approach raises the following questions:

> Why didn't they set up a radio station for farmers too? Where is the radio station for the bandits in Zamfara, or for the Niger Delta militants? No single person has been prosecuted for the killings in the North-Central. Is the allegation by former president Olusegun Obasanjo that there is a planned [Fulanisation] of the country not playing out now? Every adult in the North listens to the radio, so why can't they reach the herdsmen on the existing radio stations?[68]

In this regard, the failure of the federal government to recognise the value of these referent objects and subjects—farmers, farmlands, ethnic and religious values—and employ necessary steps to ensure their safety, is often described by establishing connections between the president of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, a Fulani from the north, with Fulani-herdsmen.[69] These narratives become stronger in the context of the recent interview offered by Abdullahi Bello Bodejo, the national president of the Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore, in respect to the interests of herders in Nigeria. According to Bodejo, "Nigeria is a democracy, anybody can say and criticise anything. Fulani are all over Africa and they are the biggest ethnic group in the world, they don't have border, nothing concerns them with visa."[70] Interestingly, this seeks to affirm the homogeneity of Fulani ethnic group which contradicts other possible eco-geographical distinctions. But even more significant is the fact that it alludes to herders' freedom of movement without restriction. This also suggest that, due to the nomadic essence that binds different Fulani groups across Africa, there is a kith and kin loyalty and duty to defend the interests of Fulbe groups in Nigeria. As such Fulani-herdsmen in Nigeria gain external support from other Fulani groups in Africa which is facilitated by the porousness of Nigeria's

borders.[71]With this, then, narratives of Fulanisation depicts a grand scheme to ensure the dominance of certain groups; depending on which label is applied, it could be Fulani, Muslim, or Hausa-Fulani.

The above articulation presents an interpellatory logic which creates subject positions to define insecurity. Explicitly, Fulani-herdsmen are objectified as a threat to ethnic and religious communities in northern and southern Nigeria. This suggests that the referent of security is not farmers per se, but instead ethnic and religious values are threatened by the alleged Fulani hegemony as well as the potential spread of Islamic values. What's more, this discourse enables the construction of regional boundaries as referent objects to be protected which implies that the so-called Fulani-herdsmen should be restricted to the northern parts of Nigeria. Given this, further migration of the herdsmen, whether in search of pasture or through policies by the Federal Government to resettle herders in the southern parts of Nigeria, constitutes a significant threat to the ethnic and religious values in those regions.

Nonetheless, narratives of Islamisation—whatever that means—and Fulanisation are inherently unstable as not everyone who identifies as Fulani is, concomitantly, a Muslim or a pastoralist in any event. The connection between pastoralism, Fulanisation and Islamisation is predicated on a linear reading of Nigeria's—and Africa's—history, which situates the conflict within complex ethno-religious fautlines that characterise the Nigerian society. This discourse, of course, has been seriously challenged to show gaps, slippages, motivations and limitations. According to human rights activist, Femi Falana, in response to claims of a Fulanisation agenda put forward by Nigeria's former president, Obasanjo, notes that "majority of Boko Haram members are of the Kanuri ethnic nationality, it has nothing to do with Fulanisation of West Africa or Africa as chief Obasanjo alleged. But the dreaded group is out to Islamise West Africa."[72] This distinction and in fact the frequent clashes between Boko Haram and herders

was illustrated by Umar Kachalla, leader of the civilian anti-jihadist militia in Borno state, who shared in a press interview that "herders have been engaged in armed battle against Boko Haram and other terrorists in the north to protect both herd and men."[73] Indeed, this interrogates the link between Fulanisation, Islamisation, terrorism, and the conflict between herders and farmers.

Moreover, the national chairman of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeder Association of Nigeria, Alhaji Gidado Siddiki, refuted claims of Fulanisation by noting that: "the responsibility of the Miyetti Allah Association is to protect the interests of Fulani herders across Nigeria, while ensuring that such interests do not undermine those of other people or economic units in any part of the country."[74] Indeed, this illustrates respect for the cultural, religious, and economic dispositions of both individuals and groups in Nigeria.

Discourse of Sedentarisation

Furthermore, the herder-farmer conflict has been represented as one impelled, causally, by herders' migration, which sets them against farmers and ethnic communities in southern Nigeria. In view of this, it is assumed that the creation of grazing fields, set aside for pastoral activities and settlement camps designed for herding, will address some of these issues associated with nomadism, not least the problem of open grazing. This discourse generally describes herders and their herds as subjects and objects to be secured. Precisely, in terms of herders' livelihood as well as food security in Nigeria instead of the protection of individuals or communities from violence and abuses that emerges from the conflict. More importantly, it seeks to downplay regional (north-south and east-west) boundaries based on citizenship and

national cohesion. However, this discourse has been challenged at different sites, producing contradictory positions at the federal and state levels of government.

With the series of rejection of grazing bills proposed through the national assembly due to, among other things, emphasis on grazing routes which encourages open grazing, other alternatives have been explored by the Nigerian federal government. Arguably, grazing and settlement bills are not especially new in Nigeria. In 1976, for example, six grazing reserves was established with the help of the World Bank.[75] Also, between 1987 and 1995, the Federal Government of Nigeria established two Ndama cattle ranches in Enugu state, and one in Oyo state.[76] The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) have consistently requested for the creation of additional grazing reserves and settlement camps as palliative to the problems facing herders.[77] Against this background, the ministry of agriculture proposed the human settlement policy (also known as RUGA) in 2019, through a series of speeches, interviews, consultations, and experimentations in 12 pilot states. Also, the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) was introduced by the National Economic Council in 2019 to address conflicts between farmers and herders.

The RUGA programme, according to the permanent secretary in the federal ministry of agriculture and rural development, Alh. Mohammadu Umar is "a scheme that allows cattle herders to be registered and recognised with cooperatives for the purposes of ranching. These cooperatives will acquire rental agreements for land from state governments."[78] Relatedly, the presidency, through its spokesman, Garba Shehu, expressed that:

> The presidency wishes to draw attention to recent unhelpful comments regarding the plan to stop roaming of cattle herders with the attendant clashes with farmers. Ruga settlements seeks to settle migrant pastoral families; animal farmers, not just cattle herders, will be settled in an organised place with provision of necessary and adequate basic amenities such as schools, hospitals, road networks, vet clinics…[79]

Although the government recognises the conflict between herders and farmers, it represents the problem broadly to include other forms of animal husbandry to de-emphasise narratives that conflate pastoralism with Fulani(sation). The Ruga settlement will require the creation of camps in the 36 states of Nigeria (although to commence in 12 states before extending to others).[80] Furthermore, Garba Shehu, noted that "there is no government plan to seize state land, colonize territory or impose Ruga on any part of the federation. Government has made it clear that the programme is [voluntary]."[81] This move by the federal government has generated reactions from some state governors either in support of or against the proposed plan by invoking narratives of development or Fulanisation. Chiefly, the governor of Kano state, Umar Ganduje, in support of the settlement plan, expounded in a press interview that:

> There are three types of herdsmen in Nigeria. The first are those who are coming with thousands of cattle from West African countries [due to distance] they have to cut trees and provide food for the cattle and that creates some problem. They are attacked by farmers, and along the line, they have learnt to attack farmers as well. This category is an ECOWAS problem which Nigeria should negotiate. The second is the herdsmen from the northern part of Nigeria. They trek through the north central zone to the south. Although they don't have as much cattle as those from West Africa, they create problems by trekking from one place to the other. The third one are those herdsmen born in places different their socio-cultural and socio-religious origins…this is my own classification and I'm doing it because I'm a Fulani man. So, I know what it feels to be a herdsman and business should not continue as usual. [Sic] Herding should be a socio-economic venture and not a socio-cultural venture.[82]

The above creates typologies of herdsmen based on geography to illustrate the plight of herders and in doing so draw attention to their socio-economic livelihood. Of course, Ganduje's ethnic affiliation, as Fulani from the north, motivates his interpretation of the conflict. But this interpretation and those offered by the federal government, interpellates security subjects and objects as well as threats, and how they should be addressed. It treats both herds and herders as objects and subjects deserving of security from eventualities—which includes, but not limited to, attacks from farmers—associated with nomadic movements which makes it all the more necessary for effective settlement camps. Indeed, this highlights the importance of dairy

products, hides, meat, among other products derived from cattle within the context of food security in Nigeria. This is because herding contributes one third of the agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) and 3.2% of the national GDP of Nigeria.[83] However, this interpretation of the conflict has been challenged and rejected by, mostly, governors from the southwest and southeast regions.

According to the governor of Oyo state, Abiola Ajimobi, "it is against the law of natural justice to [seize] people's land to cater for [other] people's cattle."[84] This essentially represents the proposed settlement plan as unethical and registers a distinction between the owners of land and those who need land while interrogating the motivations behind such demands. A similar position was put forward by Simon Ortuanya, the director-general of the south-east governor's forum, in a public statement. He pointed out that, "we will no longer allow foreign herdsmen to bring their cattle into [our] geopolitical zone through the bush paths by foot because this is what always cause conflict between our people and the herders."[85] On the implementation of RUGA and NLPT, he adds, "the fact remains that no south-east governor has donated any land or intends to donate any land for any of the two programmes [sic] due to lack of enough land in the entire south-east."[86] In short, these statements recognise the movement of cattle through bushes (or farmlands) as the cause of conflict between herders—foreign, that is, from northern Nigeria or Africa—and farmers. It also illustrates the contradictory positions between the federal government and some governors from the north on one hand, and their counterparts from the south on the other.

As has been explained in previous sections, there are Fulani camps and settlements in some parts of southern Nigeria, established since the 1960s. This raises significant questions regarding the fixity of geographical and ethno-communal boundaries and at the same time reveal their constructed-ness—namely, north-south, west-east, Fulani-Others. As Abdullahi

Sule and Bello Matawalle, governors of Nasarawa and Zamfara state, respectively, suggests that RUGA means "a developmental programme with some benefits to them."[87] Generally, discourses of sedentarisation is commonly explained within development studies, however what is relevant in this study is how sedentarisation is mobilised, transformed, and modified to achieve specific purposes in the context of (in)security and recent political events. Specifically, this discourse defines herders and their herds as essentially important given their economic and nutritional value to allow for policies and programmes that engages with their preservation. Which, in a sense, disregard the violence and other alleged crimes committed by herders and farmers alike as well as the safety of individuals and communities that could be threatened by the conflict.

Conclusion

This study explored the constructions and representations of the herder-farmer conflict as (in)security in Nigeria. The contested nature of security which specifically animates (and is animated by) the heterogeneous diversity of the Nigerian society, in light of historical and contemporary events, was illustrated throughout this paper. Of this, discourses of securitisation, Fulanisation, and sedentarisation provide three ways of framing the herder-farmer conflict. With each of these discourses presenting common-sense explanations of events and in doing so describe certain subjects and objects as referents of security while designating other objects or subjects as threat. However, the assumptions advanced by these discourses have also been seriously interrogated to reveal their gaps and slippages. Therefore, this study finds that the notion of security in Nigeria is not fix, neither is it stable nor given, as there are no foundational grounds on which assumptions about insecurity can be ultimately referred to. Rather it involves

processes and struggle of framing issues, articulating possible factors, to represent a phenomenon in ways that makes sense to a specific section of the population.

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17. See, for example, Karin M. Fierke, 'Critical methodology and constructivism.' In Karin M. Fierke and Knud Erik Jorgensen, *Constructing International relations: the next generation*. (London: Routledge, 2001) p.120.

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